



September “Nutrition Connection”: Fixing Your Food Rut!

When was the last time you tossed a vegetable into your grocery cart that you have never tried before? If you are like me, shopping at the grocery store has become quite predictive, especially when it comes to the produce section. According to consumer purchasing research, the top four vegetables Americans choose most frequently are potatoes, broccoli, tomatoes, and corn.

Choosing a variety of colorful, plant-based foods is the most efficient way of obtaining vitamins, minerals, and phytochemicals that supplement companies promise can be acquired in their “miracle capsules.” September’s *Nutrition Connection* equips you with straightforward recipes to incorporate five true (*maybe new!*) “super foods” into your recipe repertoire.

1. Spaghetti Squash

What it is: An oblong, yellow squash, mild in flavor. If you don’t care for squash, don’t cross this one off your list! Its mellow flavor is the perfect base for spaghetti sauce. Once cooked, you will quickly see how the squash got its name. The stringy squash looks just like spaghetti noodles as you fork it out of the shell.

Nutritional resume: Spaghetti squash is a good source of eye protecting carotenoids, and provides only 42 calories per cup compared to 220 calories in a cup of pasta!

Recipe: Spaghetti Squash with Basil & Cheese

Ingredients

- 1 [cooked spaghetti squash](#)
- 3 Tbsp. parmesan cheese
- 1 cup low-fat cottage cheese
- ½ cup sliced fresh basil
- Salt and pepper to taste

Directions

Combine all ingredients while spaghetti squash is hot. Enjoy!



2. Fennel

What it is: Crunchy and slightly sweet, this vegetable's flavor profile is of licorice/anise. Its bulb, stalks and leaves are all edible.

How to buy it: Bulbs should be clean and firm and without too many blemishes. There should be no signs of flowering buds that will tell you the fennel is past its time.

How to store it: Store it in your refrigerated vegetable drawer. It should keep fresh for about 4 days.

Recipe: Pork Chops with Braised Fennel & Caramelized Onions

Yield: 4 servings

Ingredients

2 large fennel bulbs, trimmed and sliced
1 cup chicken stock
4 Tbsp. butter
3 cloves garlic, peeled and chopped
2 Tbsp. fennel seeds
3 Tbsp. olive oil
4 pork chops
2 large red onions, peeled and finely sliced



Directions

In a small skillet, heat the 2 tablespoons of oil over medium-low heat and add the onion. Cook, stirring occasionally, until sweet and caramelized, about 25 minutes.

In the meantime, combine the fennel, stock, butter, garlic, fennel seeds, and a pinch of salt and pepper in a large shallow pan. Bring to a boil and simmer, covered, for 10 minutes. Remove the cover and continue cooking until the fennel is mostly soft but not mushy and the liquid is mostly evaporated. Adjust for seasoning to taste. To finish cooking, turn the heat to medium-high and cook off the remaining liquid, allowing the fennel to brown a little bit.

In a third skillet, heat the remaining tablespoon of oil. Season the pork chops and cook to desired doneness, depending on thickness, 3 to 5 minutes per side on medium-high. Remove the chops to rest, and add a splash of water to deglaze the pan. Pour the pan drippings into the fennel mixture. Serve the chops on a bed of fennel, topped with the onions.

Source: *Nibblous*

3. Brussels Sprouts

What it is: A cruciferous vegetable related to broccoli & cabbage.

Nutritional resume: Rich in vitamin K & C, these mini cabbages are well known to protect us against certain cancers, and assist with our body's metabolic manager, the thyroid.

Recipe idea: Honey Roasted Brussels Sprouts

Ingredients

1 1/2 pounds Brussels sprouts
3 Tbsp. olive oil
3/4 tsp. salt
1/2 tsp. freshly ground black pepper
2 Tbsp. balsamic vinegar
Drizzle of honey



Directions

Preheat oven to 400 degrees F.

Cut off the brown ends of the Brussels sprouts and pull off any yellow outer leaves. Mix them in a bowl with all ingredients. Pour them on a sheet pan and roast for 35 to 40 minutes, until crisp on the outside and tender on the inside. Shake the pan from time to time to brown the sprouts evenly.

4. Parsnips

What it is: A root vegetable related to the carrot that is rich in vitamin C and fiber.

Nutritional resume: Parsnips shine as a source of soluble fiber which helps lower cholesterol and keep blood sugar even. They're also a good source of folic acid, which reduces the risk of birth defects in developing babies.

How to buy it: Look for small to medium size parsnips with firm, unblemished skin for the sweetest flavor.

Parsnip Recipe: Parsnip Fries

Yield: 6 servings

Ingredients

2 1/2 pounds parsnips, peeled, cut into about 3x1/2-inch strips
1 Tbsp. finely chopped fresh rosemary
1 large garlic clove, minced
3 Tbsp. olive oil
Kosher salt, freshly ground pepper
1/2 tsp. (or more) ground cumin

Directions

Preheat oven to 450°. Mix parsnips, chopped rosemary, garlic, and oil on a large rimmed baking sheet. Season with salt and pepper and toss to coat. Spread out in a single layer. Scatter rosemary sprigs over. Roast for 10 minutes; turn parsnips and roast until parsnips are tender and browned in spots, 10–15 minutes longer. Crumble leaves from rosemary sprigs over; discard stems and toss to coat. Sprinkle 1/2 tsp. cumin over. Season to taste with salt, pepper, and more cumin, if desired.



5. Chickpeas

What they are: Chickpeas (or garbanzo) beans are legume superstars. You have either had them out of can from the salad bar or pureed as the main ingredient in hummus.

Nutritional resume: One cup of chickpeas contains 270 calories, 13 grams of fiber, and 15 grams of protein. Canned will be the easiest way to implement these into your every day diet. Look for no salt added brands (Eden Organic is also BPA-free).

Chickpea Recipe: Roasted Chicken with Italian Chickpeas

Ingredients (Yield: 4 servings)

1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil
4 garlic cloves, pressed
1 Tbsp. paprika
1 tsp. ground cumin
1/2 tsp. dried crushed red pepper
1/2 cup plain yogurt or Greek yogurt
4 chicken breast halves with bones
1 15-ounce can garbanzo beans (chickpeas), drained
1 12-ounce container cherry tomatoes
1 cup chopped fresh cilantro, divided



Directions:

Preheat oven to 450°. Mix first 5 ingredients in medium bowl. Pour 1 teaspoon spiced oil mixture into small bowl; whisk in yogurt and set aside for sauce. Place chicken on large rimmed baking sheet. Rub 2 tablespoons spiced oil mixture over chicken. Add beans, tomatoes, and 1/2 cup cilantro to remaining spiced oil mixture; toss to coat. Pour bean mixture around chicken. Sprinkle everything generously with salt and pepper.

Roast until chicken is cooked through, about 20 minutes. Sprinkle with 1/2 cup cilantro. Transfer chicken to plates. Spoon bean mixture over. Serve with yogurt sauce.

Source: Epicurious

If you follow these guidelines your everyday foods will be much improved! For more information regarding eating healthy and other nutrition topics, please contact: Jennifer McDaniel, MS, RD, CSSD, LD

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